The Philippine Department of Tourism
Official Newsletter

July 2023
Vol. 6, Issue No. 7

on the DOT

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DOT bares tourism milestones under PBBM's first year in office; Secretary Frasco optimistic on exceeding industry targets for 2023

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Ahead of the 2023 State of the Nation Address (SONA) of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco last July 23 bared the Department of Tourism's (DOT) key contributions to the 10-point agenda for economic renewal and growth under the current administration, and the strides made towards the country's transformation into a tourism powerhouse in Asia.

According to Frasco, the President's pronouncements that prioritized tourism served as an impetus to the DOT's comprehensive plan to bring sustainable and inclusive development across the sectors of the industry and to the farthest parts of the country, and make the essential pivot to highlight the strength of the Filipino culture, heritage, and identity in tourism promotions.

"We thank our President Ferdinand "Bongbong Marcos, Jr. for identifying tourism as a priority, which provided the impetus for the Department of Tourism's aggressive efforts to reintroduce the Philippines on the strength of its greatest assets, and to improve the essential pillars of tourism development, laid down in the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023 – 2028 crafted and approved under his administration," remarked Secretary Frasco.

Philippine tourism resurgence seen in 2022

Foremost on the country's tourism milestones is its recovering numbers. From February last year, upon reopening its border to all types of travelers, up until December, the Philippines welcomed 2.65 million international tourist arrivals, surpassing the 1.7 million year-end projections by nearly one million additional visitors. Of this number, 1.8 million or 69.32 percent arrived between July 1 to December 31.

Last year, domestic tourism also proved its pivotal role in the post-pandemic resurgence of Philippine tourism. The country recorded over 102 million domestic trips in 2022, posting a 176.18 percent increase from the 37.28 million domestic trips in 2021.

As reported by the Philippine Statistics Authority in the 2022 Philippine Tourism Satellite Accounts (PTSA), internal tourism expenditure last year reached Php 1.87 trillion, a 131.2 percent increase from Php 810.20 billion in 2021. Internal tourism expenditure combines domestic tourism expenditure of resident visitors within the country either as part of their domestic or international travel, and inbound tourism expenditure of non-resident visitors including foreign nationals or Filipinos permanently residing abroad. Domestic tourism expenditure took the lion's share with Php 1.50 trillion, while inbound tourism expenditure totaled Php 368.67 billion.

Meanwhile, the Tourism Direct Gross Value Added (TDGVA) share of the sector to the Philippine economy as measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) last year was estimated at 6.2 percent and valued at Php 1.38 trillion, 36.9 percent higher compared with the Php 1.00 trillion in 2021.

As of July 21, 2023, the DOT has recorded 3, 017, 224 foreign visitor arrivals, less than 1.8 million short of its 4.8 million targets for the entire year.

Marcos administration gives tourism industry a headstart towards post-pandemic recovery

To sustain the momentum for the country's tourism recovery, the DOT, with Secretary Frasco at its helm, actively pushed for the liberalization of COVID-19 protocols in 2022, including the removal of the COVID-19 test requirements and mask-wearing mandate to allow the country to be at par with its ASEAN neighbors and to send the strong message across that the country is ready to welcome visitors.

The DOT also closely worked with other national government agencies including the Department of Health and the Bureau of Quarantine in replacing the One Health Pass (OHP) with the enhanced eArrival card (now e-Travel) system to provide a more convenient entry for travelers. The move came after the DOT's proposal to remove the OHP amid complaints from inbound travelers to the Philippines, and after the Department benchmarked on more convenient arrival protocols in other ASEAN countries including Singapore.

The National Tourism Development Plan

In May of this year, President Marcos Jr. approved the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023 to 2028 submitted by the DOT under the leadership of Secretary Frasco that laid down the seven objectives of the Department focusing on the essential pillars of development towards a sustainable, innovative, inclusive, and globally competitive tourism industry.

Photo by: Office of the President

The NTDP encapsulates seven strategic goals which include improvement of tourism infrastructure and accessibility; cohesive and comprehensive digitalization and connectivity; enhancement of overall tourist experience; equalization of tourism product development and promotion; diversification of the tourism portfolio through multidimensional tourism; maximization of domestic and international tourism; and strengthening tourism governance through close collaboration with national and local government units and stakeholders.

Spurring digitalization and infrastructure development

Aligning with the priorities of the Marcos administration, the DOT placed on top of its agenda infrastructure and digitalization initiatives that would boost the connectivity of tourism destinations and improve traveler convenience.

Through its infrastructure arm, the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), the DOT broke ground on Tourist Rest Areas (TRAs) in ten strategic locations nationwide. These TRAs come equipped with features that will come in handy for travelers including clean restrooms, shower area, lounge area, pasalubong or souvenir center, and charging station.

Likewise, through its partnership with the Department of Transportation (DOTr), the DOT is also working on bringing improvements to the country's gateways, starting with the NAIA Terminal 2, Cebu City Pier One, and the Davao International Airport. Interior, decor, and furniture enhancements are now seen and felt in NAIA Terminal 2, with the enhancements in the other pilot areas nearing completion.

On the aspect of improving roads, international airports, and seaports, the DOT also collaborated with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), primarily on enhancing and continuing projects under the existing Tourism Road Infrastructure Program (TRIP) partnership between the two agencies, as well as the exploration and pursuit of new infrastructure projects, with at least Php 16 Billion invested in tourism roads for 2023.

Entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), the DOT announced that internet connectivity in 94 tourist destinations will be improved, with 46 destinations already powered up. The Department is also set to launch a Tourist Lifecycle App with the Tourism Promotions Board that will cater to domestic and foreign tourists.

Encouraging travel to the Philippines

To encourage travel, the DOT, with Secretary Frasco at its helm, pushed for the liberalization of COVID-19 protocols and the improvement of the eArrival card and e-Travel system to allow the Philippines to be at par with its ASEAN neighbors and to fully open up the country to tourism.

To encourage travel into the country and boost visitor numbers, the Department actively engaged in several discussions with airlines and the DOTr to fully maximize the country's air gateways, resume discontinued flights, and open up new routes.

Since the start of the Marcos administration, routes such as Cebu to Baguio, Cebu to Jeju, Manila to Perth, and Cebu to Cotabato have opened. Further, secondary gateways like the Clark International Airport will increase its flights, from 48 to 98 international flights, and 69 to 23 local flights.

As the DOT continues its dialogue with its partners in the aviation sector to jumpstart air routes and boost tourism activity, it is also actively taking steps towards making the country more attractive for cruise tourism.

The Philippines expects a total of 121 cruise calls for the entire 2023, the DOT reports as of July 1. This is higher compared to the 102 cruise calls in 2019. Of the 121 cruise calls for 2023, 60 have already arrived to the country while 61 are scheduled to make port calls from October onwards. Through its Cruise Tourism Program, the DOT led welcome reception programs for guests of the Silver Spirit, Silver Shadow, and ultra-luxury cruise ship Seaborn Encore.

Reintroducing the Philippines to the world

The Department also aggressively promoted Philippine tourism by mounting important local expos and participating in key international expos abroad.

Locally, the DOT led the mounting of the successful Philippine Travel Exchange (PHITEX) with the Tourism Promotions Board, and the first-ever North Luzon Travel Fair in Clark, Mindanao Tourism Expo in Davao City, and Central Philippines Tourism Expo in Iloilo to boost regional travel exchange.

The DOT and its marketing and promotion arm, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines, led the country's comeback to important international expos including the Internationale Tourismus-Börse (ITB) 2023 Convention in Germany last March 2023, and the ASEAN Tourism Forum Travel Exchange in Indonesia last February 2023. Participation in key expos abroad allowed the Philippines to successfully generate over three billion in estimated sales leads.

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"Through the enhanced tourism branding campaign, 'Love The Philippines', the Department of Tourism will continue to highlight our tourism offerings—our diverse culture, gastronomy, the unparalleled beauty of our destinations, and most especially, the warmth of our people. There is a plethora of reasons to love The Philippines and we are determined to ensure that the world is reminded of what we can offer", enthused the tourism chief.

Forging meaningful partnerships on the local, regional, and national level

Drawing from her extensive experience as a multi-awarded local chief executive, Secretary Frasco initiated listening tours, convergence meetings, and partnerships with the DOT's public and private sector stakeholders.

Acting on the President's directive, the DOT and other national government agencies led a high-level meeting to tackle electronic visa reforms specifically for Chinese and Indian markets.

In promoting the Mindanao region as a peaceful and viable tourism destination, the Department also entered into an agreement with the Department of National Defense (DND) and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG).

Together with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the DOT led the Philippine Tourism Job Fair series which has more than 21,000 tourism jobs nationwide.

In cooperation with the private sector and local government units, the DOT also launched the Bisita, Be My Guest (BBMG) incentive program, and the first-ever Hop-On Hop-Off bus tours in the Philippines, starting with Makati and Manila, providing an innovative and convenient way to travel through key cities.

Setting the stage for the Philippines

On the aspect of strengthening international tourism relations and allowing Philippine tourism to take a primary standing in the ASEAN and globally, Secretary Frasco successfully led delegations to key international tourism organization meets, and bilateral meetings with tourism counterparts to facilitate travel exchange and partnerships in the areas of training, research and development, investments, flights, jobs, joint promotions, among others.

In June, the Philippines, represented by Secretary Frasco, was elected as Vice President of the 25th General Assembly of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a position that the country last held in 1999. Moreover, during the 55th Meeting of the UNWTO Regional Commission for East Asia and the Pacific held in Cambodia, the Philippines was also elected as the Commission's Chair.

While juggling projects under a multidimensional approach to tourism, the DOT sustained aggressive efforts toward tourism promotions, as affirmed by the fact that the Philippines and its destinations continue to gain global traction and accolades from the biggest award-giving bodies in the industry.

The Philippines bagged titles as the World's Leading Beach Destination, the World's Leading Dive Destination, and Asia's Leading Tourist Attraction (Intramuros) at the 2022 World Travel Awards (WTA). The country was also hailed as World's Leading Country Destination at the Uzakrota Global Travel Awards in Turkey. The Philippines was also awarded as the Emerging Muslim-Friendly Destination at the Halal in Travel Awards 2023 in Singapore.

This year, the country is vying for six titles for the Asia category of the 30th WTA.

A world-class Filipino brand of service and standards

In response to the President's directive to "foster the Filipino brand" and "to spark our sense of pride and reaffirm our strong sense of identity", the DOT introduced an enhanced tourism slogan "Love the Philippines" anchored on showing the many aspects that travelers will come to love about the country, including the country's mega biodiversity, heritage, culture, history, and people. The DOT also embarked on a mission to train 100,000 individuals on the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE) by year-end by capitalizing on world-renowned Filipino hospitality.

The FBSE is the Department's centerpiece program that aims to promote the best attributes of Filipino hospitality and develop outstanding service to tourists. From the beginning of 2023 up to July 14, the DOT trained 61,368 individuals on the FBSE.

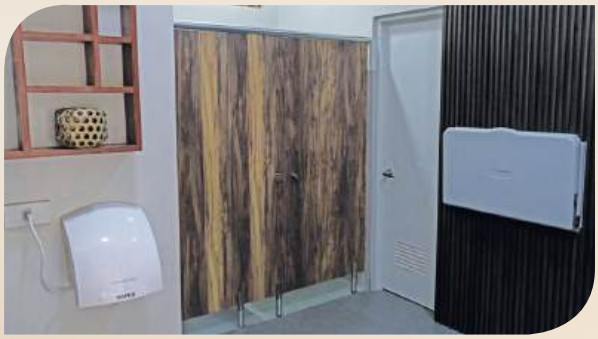
Further, putting a premium on tourist safety, the Department also strengthened its Tourist-oriented Police for Community Order and Protection (TOPCOP) program, successfully training a total of 7,575 police officers.

The DOT has also accredited a total of 13,462 tourism-related enterprises as of July 15, 2023, an 11.92 percent growth from 2022. The DOT accreditation certifies that a tourism enterprise complies with the minimum standards for the operation of tourism facilities and services.

With more events and projects underway, Secretary Frasco noted that the DOT looks forward to achieving greater heights under the Marcos administration with the continued partnership of tourism stakeholders.

"We are also very positive about the sustained progress and development of the industry as we gather more support from various stakeholders in our continuing pursuit to maximize the contribution of tourism to the lives of millions of Filipinos," added Secretary Frasco. **DOT**

Frasco inaugurates first ever DOT Tourist Rest Area in PHL



Medellin, Cebu - Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco led the inauguration of the first ever completed tourist rest area (TRA), in the Philippines last July 10.

The facility, located in Medellin, is the first to be completed out of the initial batch of 10 TRAs that the DOT broke ground on since last year.

The TRA, flagship project of the DOT identified as among the priority programs of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., is a convergence point that foreign and local travelers could approach to get information on tourism sites and attractions, activities, accommodations; reporting concerns related to safety and security; and gaining access to other provisions necessary during their stay at a destination, such as a clean restroom.

"Every detail of a tourist journey is important to the department of tourism and that is why we decided to address one of the most basic necessities of travel– clean and decent restrooms and information center and pasalubong center," Secretary Frasco said in her speech.

TRA a 'game changer' for Medellin

Tourists traveling to the northern part of Cebu can now make a stopover at the TRA in Medellin to avail of its free services, including the use of its charging stations, and comfortable seating to rest in between travels.

The TRA also features a dedicated space where tourists can buy pasalubong (souvenirs) from a curation of local crafts and products of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Identified as a need for every traveling guest, the TRA also comes equipped with a clean restroom and shower area—also free of use.

As he affirmed his support for the DOT, Medellin Mayor Joven Mondigo Jr. also said in a speech that he is grateful that Medellin has been chosen as one of the towns where the TRA was constructed to cater to tourists traveling around Cebu Island province.

"The municipality of Medellin has the privilege to be the first LGU to inaugurate and turnover this prestigious tourist rest area facility," he said.

"Tourism is indeed a game changer for Medellin, we, being an agricultural town for several decades; we recognize the vital role of tourism as the prime moving factor in our local development," the mayor added.

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More TRAs underway

During the official turnover ceremony of the TRA in Medellin, Secretary Frasco also announced that 15 more TRAs will be added to the DOT's first batch of 10 TRAs.

To recall, the DOT broke ground on TRAs in the following locations: Manolo Fortich in Bukidnon; Samal Island in Davao del Norte; the towns of Carcar, Carmen, and Moalboal in Cebu; Dauis in Bohol; Pagudpud in Ilocos Norte; Roxas in Palawan; and Baguio City.

"We will be inaugurating in addition to this one, nine more tourist rest areas across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. And I am very happy to announce that due to our partnerships with our infrastructure arm–TIEZA, we will be breaking ground on 15 more tourist rest areas this year in addition," she said.

Meanwhile, Cebu Governor Gwen Garcia also announced during the event that the Provincial Government will replicate the TRA project of the DOT in Cebu, with Bogo town as the first beneficiary.

The signing of the formal agreement on the partnership project is poised to happen this August, the governor said in an ambush interview with the media.

"In order as well to support the efforts of our Tourism Secretary, of our very own Cebuana, the province of Cebu commits to construct as many TRAs that she put here in the province of Cebu," the Governor said.

Stakeholders reiterate support to DOT

On the sidelines of the formal turnover of the first completed TRA, members of the consular corps, governors from the Visayas region, local mayors and members of the councils, representatives from the private and business sectors as well as Cebu-based creatives–who earlier issued a manifesto of support for the DOT and Secretary Frasco–joined the ceremony and once again throw their support behind the tourism chief.

"Daghan kaayong salamat. Over the course of the past few days much has been said and what has prevailed over and above everything, is that all we hold in common is, we all love the Philippines. This love has been demonstrated in known uncertain terms—by the Cebu Provincial Government led by Governor Gwen Garcia and all the officials, all the mayors, all of the board members, the chambers of commerce support, even from the Japanese Government, through our Consul General, our choreographers, our tourism stakeholders, our front liners," Secretary Frasco said as she thanked the officials and stakeholders present.

"I am thankful to our President for having expressed his trust and confidence in my continued ability to lead the Department of Tourism and I am grateful to you, Cebu," she emphasized.

Meanwhile, the tourism chief stressed in her address before a crowd of hundreds that the enhanced "Love The Philippines" tourism campaign is intended to reintroduce the Philippines to the world by capitalizing on the country's natural assets, its rich and diverse heritage and culture as well as the interesting stories of the past.

"In our tourism stakeholders—from the resorts, hotels, organization, groups, chambers, that have all declared that they love the Philippines, and from our Filipino brothers and sisters who have expressed their collective love for our nation—love is what has seen us through. The dark days of the pandemic and the many calamities that have come into our shores, love is what will prevail to usher us into this golden era of tourism," she said.

Also at the turnover ceremony are officials Deputy House Speaker Duke Frasco; Medellin Vice Mayor Alfonso Lim; other local officials; DOT Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano; and Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) Assistant Chief Operating Officer (ACOO) Gregory Oller. **DOT**

PHL int'l tourist arrivals breach 3M mark; tourism receipts surge at P212.47 billion

Manila, Philippines - The Philippines has reached its three million international visitor arrivals mark as of July 19, 2023.

Latest data from the DOT recorded a total of 3,000,079 international visitor arrivals from January 1 to July 19, 2023.

The country's inbound tourism receipts from January 1 to June 30, 2023 have likewise climbed to P212,467,522,100.14 or 502.02 percent higher than the P35,292,495,457.14 tourism revenue generated from the same period last year.

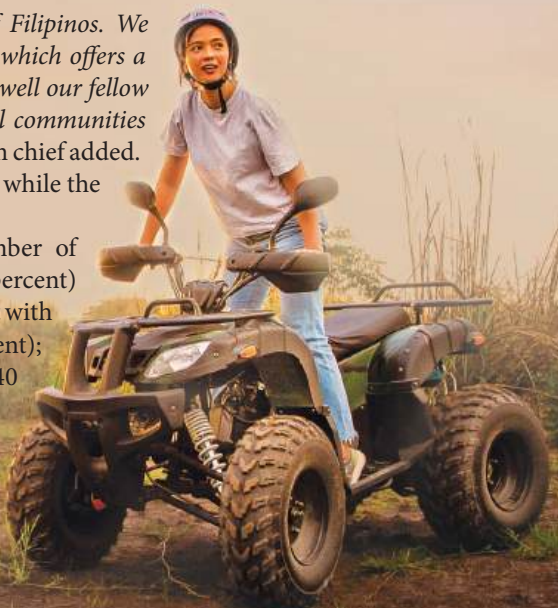
"We are glad to report that in roughly seven months, we have already achieved the 3 million international visitor arrivals mark, reflecting continued robust recovery and the gains of the Marcos Administration towards the resurgence of Philippine tourism," Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco said.

"Tourism provides employment and livelihood to millions of Filipinos. We are grateful for the renewed interest worldwide in the Philippines which offers a multitude of reasons to love travel across our islands. We thank as well our fellow Filipinos who continue to travel domestically, supporting our local communities and families who are all part of the tourism value chain," the tourism chief added.

Of the figures, 91.36 percent or 2,740,802 are foreign tourists, while the remaining 8.64 percent or 259,277 are overseas Filipinos.

South Korea delivered almost a quarter of the total number of international visitors for the Philippines with 741,658 (24.72 percent) followed by the United States of America (USA) in the second spot with 550,569 (18.35 percent); then Australia with 146,062 (4.87 percent); Japan with 143,227 (4.77 percent); and Canada with 132,018 (4.40 percent) as the top 5 source markets of foreign arrivals.

Other visitors came from China with 129,077 (4.30 percent); Taiwan with 104,211 (3.47 percent); United Kingdom with 85,847 (2.86 percent); Singapore with 81,656 (2.72 percent); and Malaysia with 54,411 (1.81 percent). **DOT**



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PBBM trusts Frasco, Tourism Chief gets widespread support

Manila, Philippines - Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco will continue leading the agency's initiatives in the resurgence of Philippine tourism post-pandemic.

This, as President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. himself said last July 7, that the tourism chief still has his trust and confidence.

"Yes, absolutely," the President said when asked if Secretary Frasco still has his trust and confidence.

"No question. I spoke to her. I have been actually in touch with her since all of these came to the fore at nakita ko naman mabilis ang galaw niya. She terminated the contracts that were in question. She has also, since then, put under review all of the other contracts that were in the pipeline. Kaya't sa aking palagay, she has it under control, she knows what to do, and what she has done so far inspires confidence that she will fix the problem and that the campaign of 'Love the Philippines' will be as successful as we hope for it to be," the President added when asked by the media.

More tourism stakeholders express support

Apart from lawmakers from the Senate and House of Representatives as well as past tourism chiefs, more tourism stakeholders have also shown their support for Secretary Frasco, noting that they are confident in Frasco and DOT's ability to further the tourism achievements of the country post-pandemic.

"I have your back covered because we know that you are doing the right thing. We, at TCP support the moves that you've been making and we love that now we have Love the Philippines," Tourism Congress of the Philippines (TCP) President Bob Zozobrado said.

The Philippine Tour Operators Association (PHILTOA) also reiterated its support for the DOT and Secretary Frasco. The association has 500 strong-members across the country.

"On behalf of the Philippine Tour Operators Association or PHILTOA, from the very beginning, we supported Love the Philippines because love encompasses everything. Not only love for the country, but love for the people, love for the food, love for the love for everything. So, kami from the association, we embraced, we accepted it by heart and in fact, we started promoting it already," said PHILTOA President Fe Abling-Yu.

"To Secretary Christina Frasco, and to the entire DOT family and its attached agencies, we fully support and we will always be behind whatever direction, whatever challenges the DOT will encounter in these times," she added.

National Association of Independent Travel Agencies (NAITAS) President Raquel Sabudico also relayed the group's support to the DOT, saying that the focus now should be on the further promotion of the Philippines as a destination.

"For me, the best thing is to concentrate on how we can help the Department of Tourism promote the Philippines because there's a lot of the beauty of the Philippines that can be more emphasized rather than seeing the negative ones," she said.

NAITAS has 17 chapters across the different regions of the country.

The Cebu-based tourism officers and stakeholders from various groups also signed a manifesto of support for Secretary Frasco.

"We, the tourism officers and various tourism stakeholders of the Once Cebu Island, issue with one and unified voice, our steadfast and resolute statement of support for Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco," it said.

"Amidst all the hullabaloo, it is easy to lose sight of Secretary Frasco's noble and original intention: to showcase the Filipinos' love for the Philippines as an experience any visitor to this Pearl of the Orient Seas would not forget anytime soon. Instead of spreading the vitriol and feeding on the vicious cycle of hate, this whole DOT situation highlights all the more the shrewdness of the decision to love," it added.

Support from the diplomatic community, private sector

In a statement, Consul General Hideki Yamaji of the Consulate of Japan in Cebu said that he believes that the Love The Philippines campaign has a huge potential in attracting more Japanese to visit the country.

"Japan has been a key market with a significant interest in exploring international destinations: and the campaign can serve as a catalyst to tap further into the Japanese market and elevate the Philippines as a preferred destination for the Japanese," he said.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Presidential Adviser for the Visayas (OPAV) along with Governors from the Visayas region declared their "full and unwavering support to the rebranding of Philippine tourism campaign".

"It is our firm belief that the DOT, under the leadership of Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, poses no other interest other than bolster the tourism framework of the country despite the setbacks and adjustments that we, as a nation, had to unfortunately encounter during the pandemic. We are confident that as soon as this matter fades into insignificance, the superior intentions of the good Secretary and her commitment to developing and promoting the Philippines to the world will prevail", said the statement signed by Presidential Assistant for the Visayas Ben Evardone, also the Governor of Eastern Samar.

Multi-industry, multi-sectoral support

The Central Visayas Region comprised of business communities from Mandaue, Cebu; Negros Oriental; Siquijor; Panglao; and Bohol also released a joint manifesto in support of the DOT and the tourism chief.

Signatories included representatives of an expansive range of stakeholders from the Central Visayas business community and established business membership organizations. Mentioned in the manifesto were the following: the Philippine Chamber of Commerce Regional Governor for Central Visayas, the Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), Mandaue Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Cebu Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce (CFCCC), Mandaue Filipino Chamber of Commerce (MFCCC), Subdivision and Housing Developers Association-Central Visayas, Philippine Retailers Association Cebu Chapter, Cebu Contractors Association, the Hotel Resort and Restaurants Association of Cebu Inc. Also cited were the other Business Membership Association in Central Visayas, Negros Oriental Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NOCCI), Siquijor Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Bohol Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), and PCCI- Panglao Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In a separate manifesto, the Mandaue Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) stated that: "We trust that she and her team will be able to chart the direction of the country's tourism industry which is a vital sector in our nation's economy. It generates revenues for the country and provides employment to our people," citing that they are standing behind the Secretary in her efforts to rectify and hold accountable those who are responsible for the misstep.

Meanwhile, The Cebu Mandaue Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industries also said in a statement the Secretary will continue to have their trust as a partner.

"The Cebu Mandaue Filipino Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Inc. continues to have full confidence in DOT Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco's ability to lead the Department of Tourism. She has a proven track record of success, and she is committed to promoting the Philippines as a premier tourist destination," it said. ***DOT***

DOT chief grateful for continued support from lawmakers, employees

Manila, Philippines – In a show of support, employees and officials of the Department of Tourism (DOT) gathered at the grounds of the central office in Makati City for Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco.

While it was just a normal working day at the department, the employees welcomed the tourism chief with personalized banners indicating their overwhelming and collective support.

The tourism chief said she is grateful for the confidence support that she and the entire Department is receiving from the lawmakers.

"I am deeply grateful for all the messages of support that have poured in reflecting that which we all hold in common: We all love the Philippines. We all genuinely desire for our country's success. The work under the Marcos Administration to usher in a robust recovery of Philippine tourism continues."

Support from lawmakers, ex-tourism chiefs

Former tourism secretary Mina Gabor, who served as chief from 1996 to 1998, wrote a personal letter to Secretary Frasco to express her support.

"Just a short note to encourage you as you start your day. I genuinely believe it (Love the Philippines) is authentic and has the legs to go global. Keep on moving forward!" she said.

Former tourism chief and Senator Richard Gordon, who earlier expressed his support for Frasco, in an interview with

One News said, *"We have to stop talking about it and move on, not to forget about it, but to make sure we don't make the deception bigger. I support Love the Philippines because it can be localized. Madaling tandaan."*

Several lawyers have also expressed their support for Secretary Frasco, highlighting the achievements of the Department under her helm as chief since she took office in July last year.

In an article, Sen. Juan Edgardo "Sonny" Angara praised the DOT secretary for the accomplishments of the institution even at the height of the now undeclared global health emergency.

"What the DOT has done over the past two years following the pandemic has been remarkable and with Sec. Frasco leading the charge in declaring the Philippines open for tourists, I am confident that Philippine tourism will be able to reach new heights and the world will see the many reasons to Love the Philippines," Angara said.

"Clearly there were issues with what was presented by the advertising agency but what is important is that Sec. Frasco acted immediately to address the issue and ensured that no public funds were wasted for this purpose," the lawmaker added.

"Tourism Sec. Christina Frasco was quick to call out the failures of said agency and to proceed with termination proceedings," said Senator Pia Cayetano.

"What has happened is truly regrettable, but it's time to pick up the pieces and focus on promoting our country's breathtaking destinations. We can all do our part by posting about our favorite Philippine vacation spots, food, events, and festivals," she added.

Sen. Francis Tolentino also described the move of the DOT as an action to uphold the institution's excellence.

"Secretary of Tourism Frasco's decisive move to terminate the Department's contract with the ad agency pending investigation demonstrates her steadfast commitment to uphold excellence in the DOT. Her integrity and competence will continue to revitalize the country's tourism industry as we emerge from the recent global pandemic. I urge all stakeholders to support Sec. Frasco in her efforts to promote the Philippines as a top tourist destination in the world," he said.

Sen. Christopher "Bong" Go, a member of the Senate Committee on Tourism, also expressed his support to Secretary Frasco while also urging Filipinos to work together to further improve tourism in the country.

"With this, I continue to support Tourism Sec. Christina Garcia Frasco and the rest of DOT for their efforts to further improve our country's tourism sector. I laud their immediate actions in addressing the issue that the promotional video has caused and in ensuring that public funds are not wasted. Instead of dwelling on the problem, let us work together to provide solutions," the senator said.

For his part, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada commended the DOT's responsible handling of the situation.

"By swiftly acknowledging the gaffe and taking immediate steps to rectify it, the DOT, under the leadership of Sec. Christina Frasco demonstrated a dedication to maintaining the integrity of our tourism industry," he said.

"It is through proactive measures that we can continue to promote the Philippines as a premier tourist destination while ensuring accuracy and responsible marketing practices," he further noted.

Likewise, Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla, Jr. also commended the DOT for its swift action, noting that it made a "justified" move to terminate the contract with the contracted ad agency.

"The efforts of the DOT under the very able stewardship of Sec. Christina Frasco in the past year to help rehabilitate local industries which suffered tremendously with the global shutdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic should not be obscured by the failure and mistake of DDB Philippines which was not only beyond, but utterly in contravention of its obligations to DOT under their agreement," he said.

"Saludo po tayo sa ating Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco at sa bumubuo ng Kagawaran ng Turismo sa pagtatahi ng turismo sa ating pag-ibig sa ating Inang Bayan. Hangad ko po na tumagos sa puso ng lahat ang diwa nito: na magmumula sa pagmamahal sa ating makulay na tradisyon at kultura, mayamang likas na yaman, at kapwa Pilipino ang pagyabong ng ating turismo. Napakaganda ng Pilipinas, Love the Philippines," said Senator Robin Padilla.

To recall, some officials from Cebu province signed a manifesto this week to express their support for the tourism chief. **DOT**

From courtside to paradise: DOT supports FIBA World Cup hosting with Philippine Tour Packages

MAKATI CITY - In support of the country's hosting of the highly anticipated FIBA International Basketball Federation World Cup 2023, the Department of Tourism (DOT) launched Philippine tour packages for international fans and Filipinos last July 25 at the DOT Office in Makati City.

"We see the FIBA Basketball World Cup as an opportunity, first and foremost, to reintroduce the Philippines to the world on the strength of our natural cultural assets, our award-winning destinations, our emerging cities and municipalities all over the Philippines, as well as an opportunity for Filipinos to come together to support the Philippine team, and for other citizens of the world to remember their sense of nationalism as they support their own countries. Truly, basketball has had such a great cultural impact on all of us Filipinos and all nations participating, that we see this as an opportunity to remind the world how much there is to love about the Philippines, and an opportunity to show the Philippines is ready, and the Philippines is open for tourism," DOT Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco announced at the FIBA Philippine tour launch.

The Philippines will co-host the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2023 group phase with Japan and Indonesia from August 25 to 30. The Araneta Coliseum in Cubao, Quezon City; Mall of Asia Arena in Pasay City; and the 50,000-capacity Philippine Arena in Bocaue, Bulacan will house 52 out of the 92 games. The final phase of the World Cup scheduled for September 5 to 10 will be played as well at the Mall of Asia Arena.

Among the potential NBA stars to play in Manila are Nikola Jokic of Serbia, Giannis Antetokounmpo of Greece, and Karl-Anthony Towns of the Dominican Republic. Top-tier national teams such as the USA, New Zealand, Jordan, Greece, Mexico, Montenegro, Lithuania, Egypt, China, Serbia, Puerto Rico, and South Sudan are set to compete in the Philippines, accompanied by their thousands of fans and supporters.

To complement the FIBA World Cup experience, the DOT teamed up with a tourism consortium of national tourism associations to meticulously craft tour packages that showcase marquee destinations such as those in Metro Manila, Cavite, Batangas, Laguna, La Union and Pampanga, Cebu, Bohol, Iloilo and Bacolod, Boracay, Palawan, and Davao.

Secretary Frasco rallied together the Philippine Tour Operators Association (PHILTOA), the Hotel Sales and Marketing Professionals (HSMA), the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), and the Tourism Congress of the Philippines (TCP) to form the tourism consortium and curate the said tour packages for the organizers, officials, players, and fans of the game.

"I share in all of your excitement for the FIBA Basketball World Cup as we also see this as a prime opportunity for the country to exceed that goal that we have set this year of ushering 4.8 million international travelers. Not only this will benefit our international tourism portfolio, but also our domestic tourism portfolio with all of these tour packages having been laid down from one region to the other...As you can see, putting all of these together has become a whole-of-tourism industry approach. Very much reflective of our President's whole of nation approach towards Philippine development," the tourism chief enthused.

Visitors can book and avail of the FIBA-exclusive tour packages with options of 3 days and 2 nights or 4 days and 3 nights' arrangements at four- or five-star hotels through the DOT website - http://www.discoverphilippines.travel starting August 1 up to September 30.

Included in the FIBA tour packages are the Philippines Hop-On Hop-Off bus tours, accredited hotel and accommodation options, and travel packages with and without airfare.

No less than President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. fully supports the country's hosting endeavor through Administrative Order No. 5 issued last March forming the Inter-Agency Task Force directing all government agencies to aid the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP), the national basketball association, in the conduct of the FIBA flagship event in the country.

"We recognize the profound impact that sports tourism can have on our economy, our hotels, accommodations, and most importantly, our tourism workers, whose livelihoods highly depend on the tourism industry's success," the DOT Secretary added.

Secretary Frasco also extended her appreciation to the DOT's infrastructure arm, Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) for the airport enhancements and the construction of Tourist Rest Areas with seven, located in FIBA tour destinations, to be inaugurated this August.

Other efforts of the Department in support of the FIBA hosting include assistance in airport reception during the airport reception services during the FIBA World Cup Draw and other FIBA activities, domestic and international promotion of the event, safety, and security with the Tourist-Oriented Police for Community Order and Protection (TOPCOP) program and the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (FBSE) Training, as well as strategic FIBA branding site enhancements.

During the launch, Ms. Claudia Perrine from the FIBA Basketball World Cup Local Organizing Committee provided insights into the country's preparations for hosting the tournament, unveiled the lineup of FIBA World Cup events, and highlighted the goal of breaking the World Cup attendance record.

Additionally, representatives from the DOT FIBA Tour Packages tourism consortium elaborated on the crafted tour packages.

Bob Zozobrado, President of the Tourism Congress of the Philippines (TCP), shared the collaborative efforts behind the creation of the consortium and the thought process that led to the development of the FIBA Philippine tour packages. Margie Munsayac, representing the Hotel Sales & Marketing Association (HSMA) International Inc., discussed the range of accommodation options and competitive rates available for visitors. Maria Paz Alberto, President of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Philippines, presented the selected tour packages, while Marlene Insigne also from PATA and Carlota Casas from the Philippine Tour Operators Association, Inc. (PHILTOA) shared on the inclusion of ten cluster destinations in the tour packages. Wendel Santos, President of Atlantis, elaborated on the online booking platform specifically designed for FIBA tours.

Previously, Tourism Secretary Frasco pledged the Department's utmost support to the SBP, PLDT, and Smart group during the FIBA luncheon which gathered the diplomatic community with some 20 ambassadors and consuls last July 12. ***DOT***

Frasco launches Philippines Hop-On Hop-Off for Manila

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco led the launch last July 6, of the Department of Tourism's (DOT) Philippines Hop-On-Hop-Off (HOHO) in the country's capital introducing Manila's "Cultural Hub" tours. Joining Secretary Frasco were officials of the City Government of Manila led by Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna, and tourism stakeholders.

Dubbed as "the country's first ever hop-on, hop-off bus tour program," the Manila Cultural Hub links it with Makati's "Financial Hub," which Secretary Frasco and tourism industry stakeholders launched last May 28.

Speaking before guests, Secretary Frasco said the flagship program elevates the tourism offerings of the country by providing convenience and digitalization saying, "Our President envisions a tourism industry that is able to compete shoulder to shoulder with our neighbors in Asia as well as the rest of the world. And that is why we introduced tourism to the digital age through this Hop On, Hop Off Bus Tours that allows tourists to book through an app, curate their experiences, and travel at their own convenience," she said.

Secretary Frasco expounded on global changing travel trends and the growing desire of travelers for more immersive experiences. *"Travel trends continue to change, and it is incumbent upon us in the national government and local government to adapt. It is time for us to evolve and to truly understand the necessity of ensuring that we are not left behind in the post-pandemic world,"* she said of the project's rosy prospects for visitors to explore and experience the different tourism hubs in the urban jungle.

"With the launch of the Philippine Hop-On Hop-Off Bus Tours here in the City of Manila, we aim to give opportunities to reintroduce Manila to our fellow Filipinos and to introduce foreign tourists to this beautiful gem of a city, to expose them to your heritage, your culture, the arts and most importantly, the story of the City of Manila," the Tourism Chief added on how the Bus Tours, with its hassle-free, seamless, contactless and convenient option, will play a pivotal role in improving the tourism experience in Manila.

"In the life of every nation as in the life of every city, feeding one's culture is tantamount to feeding one's soul. And that is why through the PH HoHo Bus Tours, we aim to partner with the City of Manila in your vision to make sure that this continues to be the Cultural Hub of Metro Manila," the Tourism Chief shared about Manila's wellspring of culture and heritage.

Meanwhile, Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna cited the importance of developing the City's cultural aspect of tourism. *"Facing the challenges of urban mobility, this will truly maximize any visit in exploring our attractions and experience a Manila that you'll keep coming back to. The Department of Tourism and the City of Manila curated the attractions to be visited and made sure that this initial run will truly reflect the character of our city. As the HoHo progresses, we will make sure to incorporate other parts of our eight tourism hubs which is the core of our tourism development plan,"* the local chief executive added.

According to DOT's National Capital Region (DOT-NCR) Director Sharlene Z. Batin, the Cultural Hub will have nine stops which will round up Robinsons Manila - Raja Sulayman - Rizal Park Luneta - National Museum - Malacañang Heritage Tours-City Hall - Escolta - Binondo – Intramuros.

With the launch of the Cultural Hub, tourists can now conveniently and leisurely stroll Manila's historic and vibrant culturescape one bus stop at a time. They can choose from curated and do-it-yourself itineraries with the option for private and guided tours. Introductory price for the HoHo Manila Cultural Hub tour starts at Php1,000 per person.

The Philippines HoHo features a dedicated website with all essential information, a reloadable EMV-capable card, and to complete the tourist experience, a mobile app for booking tours, making cashless payments, GPS networked-bus arrival monitoring and video guides, as well as information on hotels, food, and tourism merchants.

Earlier, Secretary Frasco, Mayor Lacuna, and Tourism Promotions Board Chief Operating Officer Margarita Nograles stood as witness to the signing of a certificate of commitment between the City of Manila and leaders of tourism stakeholder associations comprising the Philippine Tour Operators Association (PHILTOA) President Fe Abling-Yu, Philippine Travel Agencies Association President Patria Chiong, Hotel Sales and Marketing Association International President Loleth So, National Association of Independent Travel Agencies President Racquel Sabucido, and Marinel Barquin Lee CEO of Positive Exposure, the project integrator and tech-provider for the Philippines HoHo bus project.

In 2022, NCR recorded a total of 5.3 million overnight tourists in NCR, with Manila ranking fourth at 710,275 arrivals, while Makati City ranks one slot higher with 969,927 arrivals, tailing behind Pasay and Parañaque which took the first and second spots, respectively. Meanwhile, Manila tops the same-day arrivals with 7.4M recorded in the same period last year per the DOT's record. ***DOT***

Manila listed as one of top 20 most popular city destinations

The City of Manila joined the Top 20 most popular destinations this summer season, according to Spanish-based travel analytics firm, ForwardKeys.

According to the 2023 summer trends report published by ForwardKeys in June, Manila climbed eight notches higher, earning the 19th spot of this year's most popular city list, citing that the rise in rankings was "principally explained by the relatively late relaxation of COVID-19 travel restrictions, which triggered a surge in interest."

This was based on the extensive searches made through online travel agencies, airlines and metasearch companies, including Google Flights, Kayak, Kiwi.com, Skyscanner, Wego, among others.

Neighboring ASEAN destination Bangkok topped the list, followed by these destinations in order: Paris, London, Denpasar, Barcelona, New York, Lisbon, Istanbul, Madrid, Athens, Palma Mallorca, Singapore, Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Los Angeles, Rome, Manila, and Frankfurt. ***DOT***

DOT Chief welcomes e-Visa system for Chinese tourists

The Department of Tourism (DOT) welcomes the forthcoming implementation of the electronic visa (e-visa) system for temporary visitors with its pilot implementation among Chinese nationals, to be followed by Indian nationals by yearend, as announced by the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

During the visa reforms convergence meeting organized by the DOT last March 24, 2023 corresponding to the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., the DOT, DFA, Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Department of Justice (DOJ), and the Bureau of Immigration (BI) had discussed the streamlining of the visa application process, aiming to enhance convenience and accessibility for all international travelers, starting with Chinese visitors.

"We are grateful that the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. to implement the e-visa system will soon come into fruition with DFA's implementation as it will surely improve the experience of inbound travelers and tourists, and have a positive impact on our international arrivals especially in the Chinese and Indian markets. We believe that this will also foster even closer people-to-people exchanges, cultural understanding, and vibrant tourism cooperation," Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco said.

In 2019, more than the 1.7 million Chinese visitors to the Philippines were recorded by the DOT. As of July 26, 2023 the agency tallied 137,822 arrivals from China, following the recent lifting of travel restrictions for the Chinese.

The e-visa is also considered as one of the windows that could raise the confidence of airlines, charter operators, and travel agents to resume flights from various points in China directly to tourist destinations in the Philippines such as Boracay, Bohol, Cebu, Legaspi, Clark, Laoag, Lallo, and Manila due to the projected ease and increase in visa processing.

"Certainly, the e-visa will be a game changer in the Chinese market, which currently prefers other Southeast Asian destinations such as Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia which provide landing visa to Chinese travelers thus gaining faster momentum for the tourism recovery of these countries from the negative impacts of the pandemic," noted Secretary Frasco.

"One of the foremost advantages of this initiative is the positive impact it can have on revitalizing the Philippine tourism industry. Prior to the pandemic, China stood as the Philippines' second top tourist market, contributing significantly to our nation's vibrant tourism landscape with a record 1.7 million visitors in 2019. The e-visa system's introduction holds the promise of recovering the Chinese market and opening up to the Indian market," she added.

The visa reform convergence meeting was convened primarily to help simplify the visa application procedures of the Philippines given the intention of the DOT to help accelerate the tourism resurgence in the country, with the borders of different countries gradually being opened as the lockdown effect of the pandemic wanes globally. It also meant to address the tourism bottlenecks brought about by bureaucratic and procedural hurdles.

Earlier this year, no less than President Marcos, Jr. directed the concerned government agencies to extend the e-visa to certain nationalities to encourage tourists from their countries to visit the Philippines.

"The Philippines takes great pride in its diverse and captivating tourist destinations, rich cultural heritage, and warm hospitality. We are confident that the implementation of the e-visa system will encourage more Chinese and new Indian visitors to explore the wonders of our archipelago, creating unforgettable experiences and lasting memories that will certainly make them Love the Philippines as a top-of-the-mind tourist destination," enthused Secretary Frasco. ***DOT***

DOT, national government agencies reconvene for the 6th TWG Meeting on Visa Reform Updates

Department of Tourism (DOT) Officer-in-Charge Secretary Mae Elaine Bathan calls to order the 6th Technical Working Group (TWG) on Visa Reform Updates last July 18.

Held at the DOT Office in Makati City, the TWG Meeting is a continuation of the series of dialogues that the Tourism Department, under the leadership of Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and upon the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., initiated as early as September last year to strengthen the inter-agency effort to address concerns and introduce necessary visa reforms that will help ease travel into the Philippines and boost visitor arrivals from key source markets abroad, including China and India.

Among the areas of discussion include updates on visa reform initiatives for Chinese nationals, specifically the lifting of the quota system for visa applications, updates on the development of e-visa system between the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), improvements to the accreditation of Chinese travel agents, as well as new flights being lobbied to increase the connectivity between the Philippines and China.

The DFA and the DICT assured their continuing collaboration to ensure the successful and seamless rollout of the e-visa system which the national government targets to launch within the year.

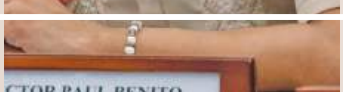
The TWG also tackled the guidelines for group visa and e-visa being developed for Indian nationals, as well as reforms and digitalization initiatives that would encourage the growth of the country's tourism products. Particular to cruise, the group tackled steps that will make the eTravel application more seamless for cruise passengers and operators.

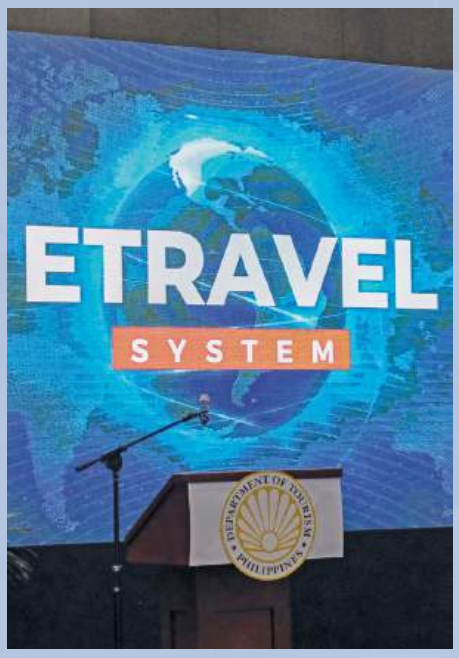
On the aspect of further facilitating education tourism, the Waiver of Exclusion Ground (WEG) application, as announced by Bureau of Immigration (BI) officials during the meeting, is now successfully integrated to its eServices platform. The WEG is a requirement of the Philippines for foreign minors below 15 years of age traveling to the country unaccompanied by a parent or are not joining a parent in the Philippines.

To recall, the DOT during the High-level Philippine Visa Reforms Meeting held last March 25 made recommendations to the TWG members, one of which is the simplification of process requirements for WEG.

In attendance at the meeting are officials and representatives from TWG member agencies: Department of Justice (DOJ) Undersecretary Brigido J. Dulay; DOJ Undersecretary Jose R. Cadiz; DOJ Assistant Secretary Majken Anika S. Gran-Ong; DOJ Assistant State Prosecutor Glacy Tabirara; DFA Office of Consular Affairs (OCA) Visa Director Leilani S. Feliciano; BI Deputy Chief and Spokesperson Dana Krizia Sandoval; BI-Office of the Commissioner Technical Assistant for Border Control Operations Mr. Jose Dennis DP. Javier; and DICT Project Manager Vincent De Torres (joined remotely).

Also present from the DOT are OIC-Undersecretary Verna Buensuceso, Assistant Secretary Warner Andrada, Director Paulo Tugbang, Director Virgilio Maguigad, and Director Judilyn Quiachon. Joining via Zoom are DOT-Beijing Foreign Attaché Erwin Batane, and DOT-Shanghai Foreign Attaché Ireneo Reyes. ***DOT***





DOT leads presentation of the 2022 Philippine Tourism Satellite Accounts

Department of Tourism (DOT) OIC-Undersecretary for Tourism Development, Verna Buensuceso, warmly greeted the esteemed guests and valued tourism stakeholders, marking the commencement of the 2022 Philippine Tourism Satellite Accounts (PTSA) and Tourism Statistics Dissemination Forum.

"It is our hope that this activity will be a venue for us to appreciate the value of good statistics, for effective tourism planning and development. May the sessions today continue to inspire us to collectively work together to see the resurgence of the Philippines as a tourism powerhouse in Asia," OIC Undersecretary Buensuceso said.

How We Do It: Tourism Data Gathering Procedures presentation produced by the Statistics, Economic Analysis, and Information Management Division of the DOT.

Bureau of Immigration (BI) Immigration Officer III Jose Dennis Javier, Chair of the e-Travel Sub-Technical Working Group and Technical Assistant for Border Control Operations, presented on e-Travel, the single data collection platform for arriving and departing passengers in the Philippines that establishes integrated border control, health surveillance and economic data analysis.

The e-Travel System is a joint project of the BI with the DOT, the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), the Bureau of Quarantine (BOQ), the Bureau of Customs (BOC), the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Transportation (DOTr), Department of Justice (DOJ) and the National Privacy Commission (NPC). ***DOT***

DOT positions PHL as one of Asia's most LGBT-friendly destinations

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco unveiled the Marcos Administration's plans and programs aimed at inclusive tourism development under the Marcos administration, including positioning the Philippines as one of Asia's most LGBTQIA+ friendly destinations. This includes the mounting of the first-ever Tourism Pride Summit this September.

Secretary Frasco made the announcement during her Keynote Address at the Philippine Financial & Inter-Industry (PFIP) Pride Summit 2023, where she noted the massive opportunities for the development of LGBTQIA+ tourism in the Philippines, with the community being one of the fast-rising sectors of society across the globe, with over 35 million travelers from this sector.

Last month, the Tourism Chief welcomed a courtesy visit from the executives of the PFIP for its partnership with the DOT on the Tourism Pride Summit in time for tourism month.

In addition to hosting the Tourism Pride Summit with the PFIP, the DOT, with Secretary Frasco at its helm, has identified the LGBTQIA+ tourism-related as a priority under the Office of Special Concerns of the Office of the Secretary.

The Department also sees to it that employees receive training on relevant topics including Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) awareness and the basics of Gender and Development (GAD).

"We at the Department of Tourism take pride in having a multitude of numbers from your community across the tourism value chain in all of the regions of the Philippines–from our personnel and, accommodation and services sector, from the frontline, managerial, supervisory, and upper echelons of the tourism industry, and even including our frontline tourism personnel in our local government units, from our pasalubong makers, to our choreographers, our artistic directors, costume makers, festival dancers, our various members of the Department of Tourism regional offices that are also members of the community. You are very well represented in the Department of Tourism and in the industry itself and your contribution to the success of tourism is invaluable," Secretary Frasco enthused.

The DOT Chief expressed her elation as she joined the organization in celebrating *"love, and the gains that the PFIP has made in its ten-year existence"* and prefaced her message by sharing her experiences as the former Mayor of Liloan in Cebu.

"At that time when I was involved in advocacies concerning various sectors, from women, children, senior citizens, PWDs and the like, I observed that while all of the other sectors of society in our community in Liloan had been organized in and federated and had a voice in local governance, the LGBT community did not have such a voice," Secretary Frasco shared.

Directly addressing this observation, Secretary Frasco organized and federated the Liloan LGBTQ, making it the first Municipality in Cebu to have a fully federated LGBT federation in all barangays.

"The consequence of that recognition from the local government unit was that we ensured that the LGBT community had a voice, not only in terms of fighting for their rights or equality as far as the passage of laws and ordinances protecting them from discrimination, but rather, also a voice in governance," Secretary Frasco shared.

As Liloan Mayor, Frasco also actively pursued programs and initiatives in support of the community, including the construction of a gender-equal comfort room at the Municipal Plaza. Each of the municipality's council and committee also has an LGBT representative, Secretary Frasco shared.

"I share with you this story, if only to give you my assurances that the work that you have been doing for the past 10 years has resulted in the grass roots recognition and implementation of the necessity for LGBTQ+ equality, equity, and recognition. It is not a mere aspiration that we must look to but, rather, it is happening, it is succeeding, and I congratulate and thank all of you–especially the PFIP–for your relentless support for this movement," she enthused.

Echoing the President's recent pronouncements during his second State of the Nation Address (SONA) on the Filipino people's demonstration of their love of country, Secretary Frasco said that "This love of country, pride of place, pride of community, I see very well in the PFIP, your Board of Trustees, your officers, your members, your delegates who are present here today, for indeed expressing love for one another, is also an expression of love for our country."

"And so, you have my full unequivocal support, and I am very eager to partner with PFIP and with all of you, to ensure that we accomplish our goal of making the Philippines one of the most [LGBT-friendly] places in Asia, and I am sincerely hopeful for your support for our effort to give our fellow Filipinos and the rest of the world all the reasons to love the Philippines," she enthused.

In further supporting the LGBTQIA+ community, Secretary Frasco during the summit also pledged a personal donation from herself and her husband House Deputy Speaker Duke Frasco amounting to PhP 500,000 to support the PFIP's educational scholarships for underprivileged students that are members of the community. ***DOT***

Tourism Chief highlights Culinary Tourism in PHL at World Chefs Asia President Forum 2023

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco announced the Department's prioritization of culinary tourism as among the country's multidimensional tourism product offerings.

Frasco made the statement last July 31 at the World Chefs Asia President Forum 2023 held in Pasay City.

Worldchefs is a professional organization dedicated to maintaining and improving the culinary standards of global cuisines through membership education, training, and professional development. Founded in October 1928 at the Sorbonne in Paris, the World Association of Chefs' Societies is a global network of chefs' associations.

During her speech, Secretary Frasco expressed her gratitude to the chefs that purveyed their love for food resulting in the propagation of their respective countries' cultures and identities.

"Our President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. envisions the Philippines to have a primary role in Asia, in terms of being able to reintroduce itself to the world, not only on the aspect of fun and adventure, but most importantly, to allow you to get to know the heart and soul of the Filipinos that lies in our history, our heritage, our identity, and our living cultural traditions, including, and especially, our culinary traditions," Secretary Frasco enthused.

The three-day forum, co-hosted by DOT's attached agency, the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines brought together some 100 delegates from 18 countries in the food and beverage (F&B) and hospitality industries, including leaders, professionals, educators, suppliers, Philippine Culinary Cup judges, and competitors from member countries of different Asia-Pacific chefs associations.

"Under the National Tourism Development Plan recently approved by President Marcos, one of the objectives identified by the DOT is the importance of multidimensional tourism, to ensure that when tourists come to the Philippines, they are able to enjoy the width, length and breadth of our offerings. And that is why we're here to support culinary and gastronomic tourism," the tourism chief added.

The LTB Philippines Chefs Association, the premier chefs' association in the Philippines and a national member of the World Association of Chefs' Societies or Worldchefs, organized the event.

Meanwhile, World Chefs President Thomas Gugler expressed his love for the Philippines, particularly, its local cuisine.

"I love the Philippines, the hotel, the friendliness of the people, the warm welcome, the food is great. I love to have Filipino food," the Worldchefs President shared.

Chef Gugler likewise expressed his love for Filipino food including Chicken Adobo, Beef Caldereta, Pancit, and Sinigang, also highlighting the dedication and hard work of Filipino culinarians that he has worked with, emphasizing their impact on the global arena.

The World Chefs Asian Presidents Forum, which aims to promote camaraderie among chefs in the Asia-Pacific region, included various activities, such as the presentation of the latest gastronomical trends, sharing knowledge on sustainability practices, conducting culinary education sessions, the launch of the regional e-book, global chefs challenge, and community outreach in Baseco Port Area, Manila.

"Food is important not only because it feeds the stomach but also because it feeds the soul. Through our support for the propagation of our culinary traditions, we are able to invoke pride of place and a sense of identity, and we're able to find common ground, a reason for which we unite," said Secretary Frasco.

"For in every celebration, big or small, in every activity, whether it be a fiesta, festival, graduation, wedding, or even a wake, from birth to tomb, food is there to give us the comfort that we need because it's anchored in a deeply embedded memory. And therefore, I myself would like to express my gratitude for all the passion with which you have pursued culinary development all over the world. I'm most impressed by your efforts as well to propagate these culinary traditions among the youth to ensure that the traditions of your respective countries are continued and honored," enthused the tourism chief.

Worldchefs Continental Director for Asia Director Willment Leong, LTB Philippines Chefs Association President Chef Carlo Miguel, LTB Philippines Chefs Association Vice President James Antolin, DOT Undersecretary Ferdinand Jumapao, and representatives from TPB joined the chefs and delegates during the forum. ***DOT***

Celebrating Culinary Tourism: The 2023 Manila Food and Wine Festival

The inaugural The Manila Food & Wine Festival (MFWF), a culinary tourism celebration presented by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the MFWF Team, opened with grandeur and flair last July 14 at The Westin Manila.

From July 14 to July 27, food lovers and wine enthusiasts will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a gastronomic journey that showcases the country's vibrant food culture.

A plethora of exciting activities await festival-goers, including the festival bazaar at the Shangri-La Plaza Grand Atrium, which runs until July 16, a Sunday lunch curation, a series of chef collaborations in the best restaurants in Antipolo, Silang/Tagaytay, and Manila, a Makati pub crawl, a food stamping program, and the gala dinner finale.

Joining the MFWF grand launch are special guest merchants and innovators from the food and beverage industry, including Luisita Rum, Esguerra Kurobota, Distilirea Limtuaco, Karabella Dairy, and Westin Manila, among others.

MFWF is co-presented by the DOT - Metro Manila, Our Awesome Planet, Cebu Food & Wine Festival, Resto PH, The Westin Manila, Edsa Shangri-La Plaza, Discovery Primea, and Admiral Hotel Manila. ***DOT***

NMP-Cebu to spur tourism development in Visayas Region–Frasco

CEBU CITY - Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco said the newly inaugurated National Museum-the first of its kind in Cebu, and the largest in the Visayas region, will spur tourism development, not only for Cebu but for the entire region as well.

On July 28, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. and First Lady Liza A. Marcos inaugurated the NMP-Cebu together with Secretary Frasco, NMP Chairperson Andoni M. Aboitiz, NMP Director General Jeremy Barnes, Cebu Governor Gwendolyn Garcia, and Cebu City Mayor Michael Rama.

The DOT, through its infrastructure arm, the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) supported the restoration and conversion efforts of the NMP-Cebu in the four-year journey it took to its present state.

"With the newly-inaugurated National Museum of the Philippines in Cebu, the cradle of Christianity in the Philippines, we open the doors to a temple of history and culture, inviting tourists - local and international alike to witness the archaeological and natural wonders and rich culture and artistry of this side of the country. The NMP-Cebu is not just a museum but a bridge to our past and a window into our future, highlighting the commonalities and strengths of our identity as Cebuanos and as Filipinos," said Secretary Frasco.

"The opening of the largest National Museum of the Philippines in Visayas will not only provide tourism gains in the province of Cebu but in the entire region. Needless to say, the museum will be a substantial addition to the plethora of offerings of Cebu providing a new reason to love and visit Cebu, and Central Visayas," added the tourism chief.

Meanwhile, in his speech, President Marcos emphasized that the conversion of the landmark into an NMP-managed property is in line with the national government's agenda to promote tourism and nurture the Philippines' national identity.

"I am delighted to be with you today at the inauguration of the National Museum of the Philippines in Cebu City. It is a milestone not only for the Queen City of the South and the whole province of Cebu but for the entire country as the opening of this museum brings to the fore our rich, natural cultural, and artistic treasures," the President said in an address.

"Museums are considered valuable cultural assets to a nation as they build a sense of community, document history, inspire creativity, promote tourism, and unite people through shared heritage. Indeed, through the art and the artifacts that they showcase, museums enable visitors to get a glimpse of the past, understand the present, and illuminate the way to the future. The inauguration is a true testament that when we pursue a united approach to any task, we can accomplish projects that will benefit generations of Filipinos," he emphasized.

Rebuilding a cultural landmark

Situated at the heart of Cebu City's shipping capital, the building of the now NMP-Cebu was once the Cebu Customs House built in 1910 which was part of the grand design for Cebu created by American architect William Edward Parsons, to facilitate trade between the island and other neighboring communities.

The landmark has withstood the test of time for 94 years, including the destructive Second World War. It was during the time of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo that it was converted into "Malacañang sa Sugbo" in 2004, which served as the official residence of a Philippine president in Cebu. The move was also a testament to the province's contribution to the country as a frontier of national progress.

But the cultural treasure was not spared from the deadly October 15, 2013 earthquake when it was one of the 25 public and private structures in Cebu City that sustained extensive damage prompting authorities to close it for safety.

In 2019, during the chairmanship of former President Arroyo's daughter, Evangelina Lourdes Arroyo-Bernas, a proposal was made to restore and convert the landmark into the biggest regional museum of the NMP in Cebu. This is in recognition of Cebu's rich history, paired with its cultural and natural heritage assets. The initiative was also supported by the Cebu Port Authority, the Office of the President as well as the local chief executives of the province.

In December of the same year, the Cebu Port Authority and the NMP signed a usufruct agreement which gave the latter to use the landmark as NMP for 25 years.

Five key art galleries

Boasting a rich artistic, cultural, and historical relevance, the NMP Cebu features five key art galleries for its inaugural event:

"Kinaiyahan: Cebu's Natural Wonders" is located in Gallery 1 which features unique geological features, including some unfamiliar plant and animal species endemic to the place which would potentially draw the attention of would-be visitors.

"Ang Karaang Sugbo ug ang mga Kabiling Bahandi" or Gallery 2 contains significant archaeological finds that would further educate visitors about the history of Cebu, and others related to the Philippines.

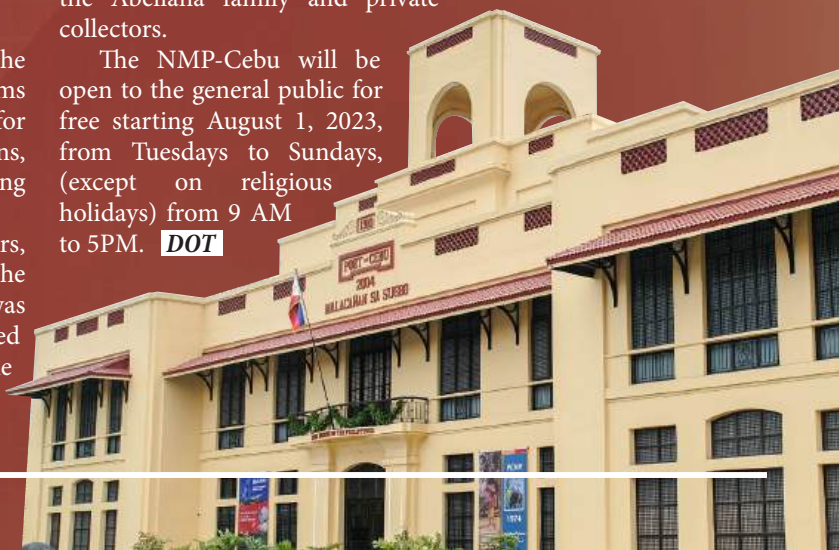
"Paglawig: Cultural Movement Across the Seas" of Gallery 3 features the exhibit of sustained ethnographic traditions inculcated in maritime history and industry.

The Gallery 4 of the museum, on the other hand, is a special exhibit especially curated for the inaugural event which displays "The Philippine Center New York Core Collection of 1974", which brought the collection of the Philippine Center in New York to Cebu to share with new audiences the artworks of leading Filipino artists in the early 1970s.

Finally, Gallery 5, or the "Ang Kamamugnaon ug Kinaadman ni Maestro Tinong" highlights the work of famed Cebuano artist Martino "Tinong" Abellana, likewise dubbed as the "Dean of Cebuano Painters" who became a central figure in the development of most Cebuano artists.

Abellana generously opened his home to the children of Carcar and unselfishly shared his kamamugnaon (creativity) and kinaadman (genius) with generations of Cebuano artists for more than four decades. Paying a special tribute to the artist, the exhibition features a selection of his works—from his sketches, portraits, abstract paintings, and landscapes—pooled from the Abellana family and private collectors.

The NMP-Cebu will be open to the general public for free starting August 1, 2023, from Tuesdays to Sundays, (except on religious holidays) from 9 AM to 5PM. ***DOT***



ON THE GROUND NEWS

Regional News Updates

DOT Region 2 expresses willingness to work with Isabela Province's Camp Melchor

By: DOT-2

The Department of Tourism (DOT) Region 2, headed by Regional Director Troy Alexander Miano, paid a visit to the 5th Infantry Division at Camp Melchor in the town of Gamu, Isabela. The visit aimed to promote the camp's diverse attractions and activities, including its museum, tala park, Indigenous Peoples Village, golf course, and firing range, among others.

As part of DOT Region 2's ongoing efforts to showcase unique destinations through the creation of new tourism circuits in the region, RD Troy Alexander Miano personally led the delegation to experience the tourism and recreational offerings at Camp Melchor.

One of the highlights of the visit was the camp's museum, which houses a collection of artifacts, memorabilia, and historical displays that pay tribute to the bravery and sacrifices of the military forces throughout the years. Visitors had the opportunity to delve into the rich history and heritage of the armed forces, gaining a deeper appreciation for their contributions to the nation.

Tala Park, another captivating attraction within Camp Melchor, mesmerized the visitors with its natural beauty and serene ambiance. This sprawling park is a sanctuary of tranquility, featuring tree houses, fishpond, and well-maintained pathways, making it an ideal spot for leisurely walks, picnics, and family outings.

The Indigenous Peoples (IP) Village served as a remarkable opportunity for the delegation to learn about the indigenous cultures that coexist within the region and the nearby regions. This cultural exchange fostered a greater understanding and appreciation of the country's diverse cultural heritage.

Camp Melchor's well-maintained golf course, designed to cater to both amateur and seasoned golfers, proved to be a haven for sports enthusiasts. Its scenic landscapes, manicured fairways, and challenging holes provide an unparalleled golfing experience, making it a must-visit destination for golf

aficionados.

Furthermore, the firing range at Camp Melchor exemplified the camp's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of military training with their impressive firing range facility.

RD Troy Alexander Miano expressed his gratitude to the 5th Infantry Division's for welcoming the DOT Region 2 delegation and commended the camp's efforts in providing a diverse range of attractions for visitors. He stated, *"We are thrilled to collaborate with the camp in promoting its remarkable offerings to domestic and international tourists."* The delegation was welcomed by Lt Col Reah M Valera FS (GSC) PA Finance Service General Staff Corps Philippine Army Commanding Officer,5IMB and Lt Col Dominador B. Valerio PA CO 5CMO Battalion.

The 5th Infantry Division, also known as the "Star Division," is not only recognized for its commitment to national security but also for its picturesque surroundings and recreational facilities. The visit to Camp Melchor by DOT Region 2 has opened doors for future collaborations between the Department of Tourism and the military, fostering partnerships that will further boost tourism and showcase the region's unique attractions. ***DOT***

Department of Tourism, Region 2, successfully conducts regional tour guides assembly and familiarization tour

By: DOT-2

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TO OUR AUGUST BIRTHDAY CELEBRATORS

4 Ramil Basuel

4 Rose Anne Ama

5 Camelia Amita

7 Sherwin Renzo Ramirez

9 Herbie Aguas

9 Blessy Grace Tansingco

9 Kim Denise Mendoza

10 Warren Palacio

10 Faye Angeli Reyes

11 Kristine Tarriela

12 Clara Buscano

12 Alex Lazaro

12 Ezrah Grace Bayuga

12 Jacqueline Anne Reposar

13 Socrates David

13 Merlyn Baal

13 Ivannovich Agote

14 Roche De Los Reyes

14 Charles Anthony Rotoni

16 Gladys Quesea

16 Ma. Cristina Ochangco

17 Maria Elizabeth Viray

18 Kurt Russel Tanael

20 Ricardo Rosel

20 Claudie Aquino

20 Arturo Borja

21 Raymund Glen Agustin

21 Allan Alcid

21 Roger Cruz

21 Allen Gonzales

21 Edward Bullecer

22 Roqueza Palmes

23 Gay Nora Marie Gapas

23 Carminah Garcia

24 Reynaldo Gesmundo

24 Jennifer Factora

24 Roy Dando

25 Lawrence Alcantara

25 Mylene Talana

27 Janice Esmane-Maldonado

27 Paul Brian Lao

28 Agustina Isip

28 Pamela Denise Cababasay

31 Ramon Rebulado

31 Manette Reyes

31 Jocelle Valera